

Truth vs. Liberty Is a False Idea

- The present crisis in ethics is due to a misconception that posits truth against liberty, say moral theologians who met recently in Rome.

The International Research Area on Moral Theology (AIRTm), of the John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and the Family, gathered experts to reflect on the theme "Truth and Liberty in Moral Theology."

Monsignor Livio Melina, AIRTm director, told Vatican Radio that the split between truth and morality leads, "on one hand, to think of truth as foreign to liberty and, consequently, it becomes a mechanical truth, imposed from outside, which regards itself as 'ugly' ...; and, on the other hand, to think of a liberty that, detached from truth, becomes arbitrary, conceived as the expression of a wish, without referring any longer to its own direction."

--Q: What have been the most important results of this meeting?

--Monsignor Melina: The most important result was the face-to-face confrontation of moral theology scholars on the possibility of thinking about truth, Christian moral truth, in keeping with liberty.

There were many interesting suggestions: for instance, the idea of a synthesis of truth and liberty that is found originally in beauty, as that which attracts one and which, therefore, reflects the intrinsic harmony between truth and liberty. Or the idea of the direction of the meaning of life, in which truth alone matters: This was the contribution of professor Giuseppe Angelini of Milan's department of theology of Northern Italy. Or the perception of the original experience of love, an experience that gives content to liberty and, at the same time, is an indication of the nature of truth.

The talks on the last day, especially professor José Noriega Bastos', clarified particularly how Christ is the truth of man. However, Christ can be the truth precisely because he is the way. Thus, a circularity between truth and liberty has been re-established. Truth is the guide of liberty, but it is only accessible at the price of personal risk, of the risk of the entire person in an attitude of faith, an attitude that also implies a practical risk. He who accesses truth is only the one prepared to spend his life for it.

--Q: However, truth is often perceived as a moralism imposed on liberty from outside.

--Monsignor Melina: This is a great challenge for Christianity: to abandon moralism and, instead, rediscover the meaning of authentic morality, of a morality that is the expression of the fundamental dynamism of the human heart, which through its own actions seeks its own identity in love and

communion with people; to rediscover the meaning of authentic morality that is the foundation of our choices and also of our daily life, of everything we must face each day. This is the contribution that, from our point of view, we can make as a theological research group.

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